

doors and became the first nursing home in Connecticut for the treatment of persons with AIDS or the HIV virus. Since it opened, Leeway has treated more than 150 individuals. And while Catherine Kennedy's original idea was to create a center to primarily provide quality care for dying patients, today nearly half of their patients are able to go home and resume their everyday lives.

Catherine Kennedy is a shining example of what one person can accomplish if they are willing to fully commit themselves to the betterment of their community. She overcame tremendous resistance and even greater odds to open this nursing home. Her determination has resulted in a better life for hundreds of people living with HIV/AIDS in Connecticut, as well as in communities all across the country who look at Leeway as a model for providing quality care.

But Catherine Kennedy touched the lives of many more people than just those who struggle with this deadly disease. She was a beloved figure by all who knew her, and she inspired those around her to ask more of themselves and reach out to others in need. She will be dearly missed.

She is survived by her husband Paul, her three sons, two brothers and two sisters. I offer my heartfelt condolences to them all.●

ELIMINATING THE BACKLOG OF VETERANS REQUESTS FOR MILITARY MEDALS

● Mr. HARKIN. Mr. President, I would like to take some time to address an unfulfilled obligation we have to our nation's veterans. The problem is a substantial backlog of requests by veterans for replacement military medals.

I first became aware of this issue a few years ago after dozens of Iowa veterans began contacting my State offices requesting assistance in obtaining medals and other military decorations they earned while serving the country. These veterans had tried in vain—usually for months, sometimes for years—to navigate the vast Pentagon bureaucracy to receive their military decorations. The wait for medals routinely exceeded more than a year, even after intervention by my staff. I believe this is unacceptable. Our nation must continue its commitment to recognize the sacrifices made by our veterans in a timely manner. Addressing this simple concern will fulfill an important and solemn promise to those who served to preserve democracy both here and abroad.

Let me briefly share the story of Mr. Dale Homes, a Korean War veteran. Mr. Holmes fired a mortar on the front lines of the Korean War. Stacy Groff, the daughter of Mr. Holmes, tried unsuccessfully for three years through the normal Department of Defense channels to get the medals her father deserved. Ms. Groff turned to me after her letter writing produced no results.

My office began an inquiry in January of 1997 and we were not able to resolve the issue favorably until September 1997.

Ms. Groff made a statement about the delays her father experienced that sum up my sentiments perfectly: "I don't think it's fair . . . My dad deserves—everybody deserves—better treatment than that." Ms. Groff could not be more correct. Our veterans deserve better than that from the country they served so courageously.

Another example that came through my district offices is Mr. James Lunde, a Vietnam-era veteran. His brother in law contacted my Des Moines office in January of this year for help in obtaining a Purple Heart and other medals Mr. Lunde earned. These medals have been held up since 1975. Unfortunately, there is still no determination as to when Mr. Lunde's medals will be sent.

The numbers are disheartening and can sound almost unbelievable. For example, a small Army Reserve staff at the St. Louis Office faces a backlog of tens of thousands of requests for medals. So why the lengthy delays? Why, at one personnel center, is there a backlog of 40,000 requests?

The primary reason DOD officials cite for these unconscionable delays is personnel and other resource shortages resulting from budget cuts and hiring freezes. For example, the Navy Liaison Office has gone from 5 or more personnel to 3 within the last 3 years. Prior to this, the turnaround time was 4-5 months. Budget shortages have delayed the agencies ability to replace employees who have left, and in cases where they can be replaced, the "learning curve" in training new employees leads to further delays.

Yesterday, during the debate over the Defense Appropriations bill, I offered an amendment to eliminate the backlog of unfulfilled military medal requests. The amendment was accepted by unanimous consent.

My amendment directs the Secretary of Defense to allocate resources necessary to eliminate the backlog of requests for military medals. Specifically, the Secretary of Defense shall make available to the Army Reserve Personnel Command, the Bureau of Naval Personnel, the Air Force Personnel Center, the National Archives and Records Administration, and any other relevant office or command, the resources necessary to solve the problem. These resources could be in the form of increased personnel, equipment or whatever these offices need for this problem. In addition, this reallocation of resources is only to be made in a way that "does not detract from the performance of other personnel service and personnel support activities within the DOD."

Our veterans are not asking for much. Their brave actions in time of war deserve our highest respect, recognition, and admiration. My amendment will help expedite the recognition they so richly deserve. Our veterans deserve nothing less.●

HONORING THE COUNTRYSIDE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT

● Ms. MOSELEY-BRAUN. Mr. President, it is my distinct pleasure to bring to the attention of the Senate the achievements of one of the Nation's most accomplished firefighting districts.

The Countryside Fire Protection District, in my home state of Illinois, has recently received accreditation from the Commission on Fire on Accreditation International. The Countryside Fire Protection District, serving the towns of Hawthorn Woods, Indian Creek, Long Grove, Vernon Hills and portions of unincorporated Lake County, was the first district in the world to be awarded this prestigious mark of firefighting quality and excellence. The Village of Long Grove, the Lake County Board and the Office of the Illinois State Fire Marshall have since recognized this important achievement.

The Commission on Fire Accreditation International, created by the International Association of Fire Chiefs and the International City/County Manager Association, is a non-profit trust organization dedicated to the quality and improvement of fire and emergency service agencies. The Commission offers accreditation for local firefighting districts after a comprehensive evaluation. Accreditation is awarded if, among other qualifications, a district's firefighting program is broad, rigorous, contemporary and adaptive. The Countryside Fire Protection District, under the exemplary leadership of Chief A. Lewis Landry, has demonstrated those standards and continues to be a model for both this Nation and the international firefighting community to follow.

As a member of the Congressional Fire Services Caucus, I am deeply impressed by the caliber of services that the Countryside Fire Protection District Provides. With admirable distinction, Chief Landry and the fire fighters of his district have gallantly protected their district from the perils of disaster, ensuring the safety of their fellow citizens. I congratulate the members of the Countryside Fire Protection District on this momentous achievement, and I extend my gratitude to you for your selfless dedication to the safety of your community and your neighbors.●

RECOGNIZING SECRETARY OF EDUCATION RICHARD RILEY

● Mr. ROCKEFELLER. Mr. President, today, I would like to recognize the extraordinary work and dedication of our Secretary of Education, the Honorable Richard Riley. I am quite proud to call Secretary Riley a good friend. Over many years, I have had the privilege of working closely with the Secretary to promote quality education and help children and families. I believe everyone in the Senate understands the importance of quality education for every child, even if we may sometimes disagree on the best ways to achieve this fundamental goal.